

**Law Enforcement Shift Schedules:
Results of a 2009 Random National Survey of Police Agencies**

Karen L. Amendola
Meghan G. Slipka
Edwin E. Hamilton
Michael Soelberg



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Police Foundation
1201 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20036-2636
(202) 833-1460
(202) 659-9149 fax
E-mail: pinfo@policefoundation.org
www.policefoundation.org

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This report and others from the Police Foundation shift length experiment are available at www.policefoundation.org/shiftexperiment/.

Introduction

Many police agencies throughout the U.S. have adopted variations on the traditional five-day, eight-hour/day work schedule. Compressed schedules (longer hours over fewer days weekly) have become increasingly attractive to both police agencies and police personnel for a variety of reasons. However, there is no known national source that indicates the extent to which compressed schedules have been implemented. Therefore, as part of a larger study about the impact of various shift schedules on safety, health, performance, and quality of life,¹ the Police Foundation conducted a random phone survey of police agencies. The purposes of this phone survey, conducted first in November 2005, and again in November 2009, were to determine the proportion of agencies having various shift schedules (e.g., 8-, 10-, or 12-hours in length) for their field patrol officers and the extent to which agencies still employed rotating shifts. This report presents the findings from the 2009 follow-up survey.

Methodology

The sample was drawn from the *2000 Census of State and Local Law Enforcement Agencies* (U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics). A total of 300 county, township, and municipal (city, town) police departments with 50 or more sworn members were randomly selected. In this survey (November, 2009), we obtained a 100% response rate for all 300 agencies. At the time of this follow-up survey, there were 12 agencies (4%) whose sworn ranks had dropped below 50 officers. However, we included the data from these 12 agencies in our analysis and included these cases in with the small agencies (50-100 officers) because they had participated in the original survey. Because we did not survey agencies with fewer than 50 sworn officers, the agencies with fewer than 50 officers would not be representative of similarly sized agencies. As shown in Table 1, just over 52% of the respondents were from agencies with between 50 and 100 sworn officers; almost 29% were from mid-sized (101 to 200 sworn officers) agencies, and 15% were from large agencies (201 or more sworn members).

Table 1. Respondents Based on Agency Size

Number Sworn Officers	Number of Responding Agencies (%)
< 50	12 (4.0)
50 to 100 (small)	157 (52.3)
101 to 200 (medium)	86 (28.7)
201 + (large)	45 (15.0)
Total	300 (100)

¹ *The Shift Length Experiment: What We Know About 8-, 10-, and 12-Hour Shifts in Policing* is available at www.policefoundation.org/shift_experiment/.

Results

Shift Length

As illustrated in Table 2, the most prevalent shift length across all agency sizes was the traditional, 8-hour shift (29.3%). However, the 12-hour shift was a close second with 26.3% of agencies having adopted them. Less traditional schedules like 9- and 11-hour work shifts were very uncommon; these two shifts combined account for only 10% of the overall shift schedules. Importantly, while 10-hour shifts had been adopted by about 22% of agencies, there was a similar proportion of agencies who reported using a different shift length such as 9-, 11-, or 13-hour schedule² (11.3%) or multiple shift lengths (10.7%) concurrently. Of the agencies reporting the use of mixed shifts ($n = 32$), over two-thirds (71.9%) did not provide information about how they implemented these shifts. Two agencies (6.3%) reported employing shorter shift lengths during midnight shifts, whereas three (9.4%) actually reported employing longer, 10-hour shifts during midnight shifts. The remaining four agencies (12.5%) using mixed shifts had unique systems as follows:

1. Four 10-hour shifts on Monday-Thursday, or three 12-hour shifts for Friday-Sunday shifts;
2. 8.5-hour³ shifts for most officers; testing 10-hour shifts in some districts;
3. 12-hour shifts are run in the summer months; the rest of the year commanders can implement 8-, 10-, or 12-hour shifts at their discretion;
4. Alternating 8- and 16-hour shifts over a two-week period as follows: 8 on, off; 16 on, off; 8 on, and so on. This averages 48 hours in week one and 32 in week two.

Shift Length by Agency Size

As shown in Table 2, 10-hour shifts were the most common among the larger agencies (33.3%). About one-fourth (24.4%) were still using 8-hour tours, and there were an equal number of agencies employing 11- and 12-hour tours (11.1% each). Also of interest among the largest agencies was the fact that they were more likely than smaller agencies to have adopted multiple shift lengths (17.8% versus 11.6% for mid-sized agencies, and just 8.3% for the smallest agencies).

In the mid-sized agencies, there was an almost equal proportion of agencies who employed 8- or 12-hour shifts (26.7% and 25.6%), with 10-hour shifts following slightly behind (22.1%).

² Actual shift lengths were reported by departments, and we applied rounding as follows: schedules of 7.5 to 8.4 hours were classified as 8-hour tours; 8.5 to 9.4 hour tours were considered 9-hour shifts; 9.5 to 10.4 tours were considered 10-hour shifts; 10.5 to 11.4 hours were considered 11-hour tours; 11.5 to 12.4 hours were considered 12-hour shifts; and those with 12.5 to 13.4 hours were considered 13-hour shifts. There were no agencies who reported schedules of 13.5 or more hours.

³ Translated in our findings as a 9-hour shift.

Among the smallest agencies, less than 20% had implemented 10-hour shifts. However, the small agencies were almost equally distributed across 8-hour (32%) and 12-hour (30.8%) tours. The small departments are most likely to have taken on 12-hour shift configurations (30.8%), as compared to mid-sized (25.6%) or large agencies (11.1%), perhaps due to the perceived benefit of having to implement only two shifts per 24-hour period.

Table 2. Distribution of Shift Length by Agency Size

Number Sworn Officers	8 HR Agencies (%)	9 HR Agencies (%)	10 HR Agencies (%)	11 HR Agencies (%)	12 HR Agencies (%)	13 HR Agencies (%)	Multiple^b Agencies (%)	Total Agencies (%)
50 to 100^a (small)	54 (32.0)	8 (4.7)	33 (19.5)	5 (3.0)	52 (30.8)	3 (1.8)	14 (8.3)	169 (56.3)
101 to 200 (medium)	23 (26.7)	5 (5.8)	19 (22.1)	6 (7.0)	22 (25.6)	1 (1.2)	10 (11.6)	86 (28.7)
201 + (large)	11 (24.4)	1 (2.2)	15 (33.3)	5 (11.1)	5 (11.1)	0	8 (17.8)	45 (15.0)
Total	88 (29.3)	14 (4.7)	67 (22.3)	16 (5.3)	79 (26.3)	4 (1.3)	32 (10.7)	300 (100)

^a Twelve agencies from the original sample had fewer than 50 officers at the time of the survey in November 2009.

^b Agency runs at least two different shift lengths.

Shift Rotation

Overall, fixed shifts (72%) far outnumber rotating shifts (23.7%), see Table 3. The use of rotating shifts is somewhat more common among smaller and mid-sized agencies with just under 25% of each using them, whereas just 20% of the large agencies were still using shift rotation.

Table 3. Distribution of Shift Type by Agency Size

Number Sworn Officers	Fixed Shift Agencies (%)	Rotating Shift Agencies (%)	Fixed and Rotating Shifts^a Agencies (%)	Total Agencies (%)
50 to 100 (small)	122 (72.2)	41 (24.2)	6 (3.6)	169 (56.3)
101 to 200 (medium)	59 (68.6)	21 (24.4)	6 (7.0)	86 (28.7)
201 + (large)	35 (77.8)	9 (20.0)	1 (2.2)	45 (15.0)
Total	216 (72.0)	71 (23.7)	13 (4.3)	300 (100)

^a Agency has a combination of fixed and rotating shifts (one shift is fixed and the other two shifts rotate).

Shift Rotation by Agency Size

As shown in Table 4, fixed 10-hour shifts are more common (31.1%) in larger agencies than mid-sized or smaller agencies (19.8% and 17.8%, respectively). Among the mid-sized agencies, fixed 10-hour shifts were the most common (19.8%), followed by 8-hour fixed shifts (16.3%) and then 12-hour fixed shifts (14%). However, our survey showed that for agencies with 100 or fewer officers, the 8- and 12-hour fixed shifts were most commonly utilized (19.5% and 20.1%, respectively), just slightly more than 10-hour fixed shifts (17.8%). Just 4.5% of large agencies operated a 12-hour fixed shift. Importantly, agencies that have adopted 10-hour shifts are least likely to employ shift rotation (9%), and those using 12-hour shifts are most likely to employ shift rotation (38%). Just over 27% of those agencies that employ 8-hour shifts use shift rotation.

Table 4. Distribution of Shift Length and Type by Agency Size

Number Sworn Officers	Shift Type	Shift Length						
		8 HR Agencies (%)	9 HR Agencies (%)	10 HR Agencies (%)	11 HR Agencies (%)	12 HR Agencies (%)	13 HR Agencies (%)	MULTIPLE ^b Agencies (%)
50 to 100^a <i>(n = 169)</i>	Fixed	33 (19.5)	7 (4.1)	30 (17.8)	5 (3.0)	34 (20.1)	2 (1.9)	11 (6.5)
	Rotating	17 (10.1)	1 (.6)	3 (1.8)	0	18 (10.4)	1 (.6)	1 (.6)
	Both ^c	4 (2.4)	0	0	0	0	0	2 (1.9)
101 to 200 <i>(n = 86)</i>	Fixed	14 (16.3)	2 (2.3)	17 (19.8)	5 (5.8)	12 (14.0)	1 (1.7)	8 (9.3)
	Rotating	5 (5.8)	2 (2.3)	2 (2.3)	1 (1.7)	9 (10.5)	0	2 (2.3)
	Both	4 (4.7)	1 (1.7)	0	0	1 (1.7)	0	0
201 + <i>(n = 45)</i>	Fixed	8 (17.8)	1 (2.3)	14 (31.1)	4 (8.9)	2 (4.5)	0	6 (13.3)
	Rotating	2 (4.5)	0	1 (2.3)	1 (2.3)	3 (6.7)	0	2 (4.5)
	Both	1 (2.3)	0	0	0	0	0	0

^a Twelve agencies from the original sample had fewer than 50 officers at the time of the survey in November 2009.

^b Agency has a combination of shift lengths (8-, 9-, 10-, 11- and/or 12-hour shifts).

^c Agency has a combination of fixed and rotating shifts (one shift is fixed and the other two shifts rotate).